

# Greens NSW policy initiative

## Rebuilding Landcare

Landcare in NSW is in crisis. Successive Labor and Coalition governments have cut the funding and infrastructure support available to support local groups. Federally, the Coalition have ripped nearly half a billion dollars out of Landcare and in NSW the move to embed Landcare in Local Land Services has seen volunteers mired in bureaucracy and increasingly ignored.

According to Landcare NSW, they are seeing increasing reports of Landcare organisations losing staff, with some facing closure as they are simply no longer sustainable.

Landcare is one of the most important volunteer networks in the country. There are 60,000 Landcarers in NSW, with 93 percent of farmers practising Landcare and 73 percent of farmers who identify as belonging to the Landcare movement.

It is a unique community and government partnership focused on managing and restoring Australia's natural environment and improving the sustainability of agricultural. Landcare is a democratic, grassroots movement which brings together people of all ages, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, including Aboriginal people, and encourages the development and implementation of local processes to shift attitudes and practices towards sustainable resource use and management.

Grassroots democracy and ecological sustainability are fundamental guiding principles of both the Greens and Landcare. The Greens are proud to support Landcare as an egalitarian, inclusive, democratic movement, driven from and for the community.

Landcare is a proven, effective model. Few other “brands” enjoy as much trust and confidence in the community. And yet, successive governments have failed to adequately resource this vital community network. It is disappointing that the Coalition have only committed to half the funding being asked for by Landcare NSW.

We don't expect volunteers in other iconic Australian institutions such as the RFS, SES and Surf Lifesaving to operate without funding, policy, leadership and support from Government. A small investment in Landcare support will leverage massive goodwill, volunteer participation and additional investment.

That is why the Greens NSW support the calls from Landcare NSW to establish a sustainable and funding model for coordination, capacity building and volunteer support and to ensure Landcare is an independent, statutory organisation. For this to be successful, cross-party support is needed and the Greens are calling on Labor, Liberal and the National Party to support our position.

The Greens NSW Landcare policy is to:

### 1. Establish a Landcare NSW Trust Fund

The Trust Fund will provide **ongoing administrative funding of \$7.5 million/year in perpetuity** for Landcare in NSW. This will include:

- Approximately **40 paid Volunteer Coordinators** who will be embedded in district Landcare networks
- **A State-wide Landcare Coordinator and executive**
- **An Aboriginal Landcare Coordinator**

2. **Instigate a parliamentary inquiry to build cross party support for a new Landcare model to ensure ongoing sustainability.**

Among other things, this will examine:

- Restructuring Landcare as a stand-alone, self-managed organisation reporting directly to Ministers for Environment and Agriculture
- Creating a position for the Chair of Landcare NSW Council to sit on the Local Land Services Board of Chairs.
- The amount of federal funding to Local Land Services which should be directly made available to Landcare for local projects (currently no guarantee of any project funding to Landcare)

### **Establish a Landcare NSW Trust Fund**

For Landcare to be sustainable, the network needs to be adequately resourced and supported and volunteers should not be bogged down in bureaucracy. If Landcare is to operate to its full potential, empowering volunteers and landholders to make positive environmental change in their community, then there needs to be ongoing support for the management, administration and coordination of the network.

That is why the Greens policy is to support Landcare NSW's call for a sustainable funding arrangement of \$7.5 million per annum derived from a dedicated Landcare NSW Trust Fund. This is a small investment for government to make to support an existing and effective platform to deliver on the ground environmental programs and community building. Landcare will then be able to leverage this funding through its network and also seek donations which can be added to the initial funding.

The Landcare NSW Trust will initially support:

- Approximately **40 paid Volunteer Coordinators** who will be embedded in district Landcare networks
- **A State-wide Landcare Coordinator and executive**
- **An Aboriginal Landcare Coordinator**

The Volunteer Coordinators will be available through a tender process that local Landcare groups can enter to secure their services. This will allow each role to be leveraged by the community and to be embedded within the existing networks, helping to deliver locally designed, locally relevant and locally owned environmental projects on public and private land.

The State-wide Landcare Coordinator will report directly to the Landcare NSW Council and be supported by an executive team to leadership, policy, evaluation, training, support, information, communication and professional development for staff and volunteers. The State-wide Landcare

Coordinator will work with the existing 11 Regional Landcare Coordinators, which are currently federally funded, and a new Aboriginal Landcare Coordinator who will ensure the strong ties between Aboriginal groups, like the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, and Landcare are maintained and enhanced.

**Instigate a parliamentary inquiry to build cross party support for a new Landcare model to ensure ongoing sustainability.**

One of the greatest strengths of the Landcare movement is that it build community capacity, social capital and leadership by empowering local volunteers to engage with locally run, locally designed and locally relevant environmental projects. But the current model, with the Landcare leadership, bureaucracy, funding and project design and coordination embedded in the Local Land Services and the Department of Primary Industries has served to disempower many Landcare groups and volunteers.

The Greens support Landcare NSW's calls for the Landcare network to become more independent and manage its own affairs by establishing Landcare as a stand-alone, self-managed organisation reporting directly to both the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture.

For such a significant reform to work it will need to be supported by all political parties, and this is why the Greens are proposing to instigate a parliamentary inquiry into the structure and funding of Landcare in NSW.

Among other things, this inquiry will examine:

- Restructuring Landcare as a stand-alone, self-managed organisation reporting directly to Ministers for Environment and Agriculture
- Creating a position for the Chair of Landcare NSW Council to sit on the Local Land Services Board of Chairs.
- the amount of federal funding to Local Land Services which should be directly made available to Landcare for local projects (currently no guarantee of any project funding to Landcare)